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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 002560

SIPDIS

STATE FOR P, E, EUR/SE AND NEA/NGA
NSC FOR BRYZA AND MCKIBBEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/05/2014
TAGS: ECIN ETRD PREL TU I2
SUBJECT: TURKEY SAYS "NO THANKS" TO TDA FEASIBILITY STUDY
ON SECOND BORDER GATE

REF: ANKARA 2201

(U) Classified by DCM Robert Deutsch. Reasons 1.4(b,d)

¶1. (C) MFA Deputy Director General for Middle East Affairs Sakir Fakili told EconCouns May 5 that, while Turkish authorities appreciated the U.S. offer (reftel) for TDA to conduct a feasibility study on a second Turkish-Iraqi border crossing, they felt such assistance was unnecessary given that Turkey already has completed its own study. Fakili reiterated the GOT view that its proposed crossing/route was the only viable option, as it would alleviate traffic congestion on the Iraqi side, facilitate control of the Kirkuk-Yumurtalik oil pipeline, and create the conditions for a parallel rail line.

¶2. (C) EconCouns said the U.S. interest was in encouraging Turkish-Iraqi trade, which promoted economic stability and development on both sides of the border. It was up to Turkish and Iraqi authorities to determine the location of the crossing and relevant roads; the U.S. had offered the TDA feasibility study as a way to accelerate progress. If the Turks and Iraqis could reach agreement and begin constructing a second crossing without U.S. help, that would be great, but it would be unfortunate if disagreement over location prevented trade from growing. He added that choice of the route on the Iraqi side of a second border crossing would seem to be a decision for the Iraqis to make.

¶3. (C) Fakili acknowledged the last point, but said Turkey would "insist" on its proposed route. He added that the Turkish feasibility study had determined the total cost of the project -- including road and bridge construction on both sides of the border, as well as the border gate itself -- to be in the \$70-80 million range. Financing was an open question, and could be discussed if and when Iraqi authorities agreed to the Turkish proposal.

¶4. (C) On May 6, PolMilOff was called into the MFA by Iraq Department Head Serra Erarslan. Erarslan, on instruction from Deputy U/S Tuygan, complained that at the weekly border talks, the US side regularly asks Turkey to increase the throughput of trucks crossing the border, which Turkey tries to do. However, she said, the US was unresponsive to Turkish requests to address the treatment of Turkish citizens, including truckers, and fees charged to Turks at Ibrahim Khalil and in northern Iraq. She continued that Turkish efforts at relations with Iraq in the new era have not been favorably received by the US, and said the most important example was the second border gate. Erarslan said that Turkey's impression was that because the KDP was rejecting the plan, the US was siding with the KDP. In light of this, Erarslan concluded, continuing US requests to expedite trucks at Habur were creating tension with the GOT in Ankara, and that the GOT was "getting tired of it."

¶5. (C) PolMilOff replied that the US was decidedly not siding with anyone on the issue of a second gate, favored the establishment of the gate and increased Turkey-Iraq trade, and was, via the TDA offer, prepared to spend US tax dollars to help the Turks and Iraqis find middle ground, or at least short and medium term solutions. Rejecting that assistance and insisting on one plan would lead to a continued deadlock on the issue. Erarslan replied that if the Iraqis could not agree with the Turks on the details of a second gate, Turkey would drop the project and all sides would have to content themselves with Habur as the only crossing. She expressed frustration that the Iraqis point the Turks to the US as the decisive party on Iraq issues, and when the Turks come to the USG, we point them back to the Iraqis. She said Turkey felt it had no reliable interlocutor for these issues, and that US promises, including to stop the illegal charging of fees by the KDP and to institute the uniform 5 percent levy at Habur on April 15 were not being kept. We promised to pass these

points back to Washington.

16. (U) CPA Baghdad minimize considered.
EDELMAN